

CONTEXT

- For decades, Uganda has provided asylum to people fleeing war and persecution in neighboring countries, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, as well as Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Somalia. As of November 2021, more than 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers were sheltering in Uganda, which hosts the largest refugee population on the African continent, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Most refugees in Uganda rely on humanitarian food assistance to meet their daily needs. However, with below-average harvests across Uganda, recent economic shocks related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and humanitarian funding shortfalls, many refugee households continue to face acute food insecurity, albeit at lower levels than would likely occur in the absence of humanitarian support, according to a November Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) analysis.
- In Karamoja, a sub-region located in the eastern portion of Northern Region, many Ugandan households are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity during 2021, FEWS NET reports. Communities in Karamoja have faced prolonged food and nutrition insecurity compounded by repeated climactic shocks, insecurity, and severe environmental degradation.
- Other areas of Uganda are generally more food-secure, though needs persist for some households in northern Uganda affected by a second consecutive below-average harvest, according to FEWS NET. The reoccurring risks of drought, floods, and landslides endanger populations throughout the country. Meanwhile, the economic shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and rising global oil prices have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, particularly among poor households.



ASSISTANCE

- As the largest humanitarian donor in Uganda, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) provides sustained support through emergency food assistance needs for the refugee population hosted in Uganda. USAID/BHA's primary partner in Uganda is the UN World Food Program (WFP), which distributes locally and internationally procured emergency food assistance—such as beans, maize, vegetable oil, and High Energy Biscuits—to refugees and asylum-seekers. Purchasing food locally whenever possible enables WFP to rapidly deliver food assistance to populations in need while simultaneously benefiting Ugandan farmers. USAID/BHA also supports WFP to provide cash transfers for food to many refugees, depending on local market conditions, empowering vulnerable individuals to purchase the food most appropriate for their households from local vendors. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, USAID/BHA assistance through WFP will reach more than 1.2 million refugees in Uganda.

- USAID/BHA also supports rapid emergency response to natural disasters, such as the floods that affected several regions in 2020, as well as multi-year programs that aim to build resilience and respond to longer-term needs among Uganda’s most vulnerable communities. Through Early Recovery, Risk Reduction, and Resilience (ER4) funding, USAID/BHA has supports two long-term food security programs implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Mercy Corps in Karamoja since FY 2017. The programs span multiple sectors including agriculture and livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, nutrition, health, governance, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). In FY 2021, through the Nuyok program, USAID/BHA supported CRS to reach more than 181,000 participants in Karamoja’s Abim, Nabilatuk, Nakapiripirit, and Napak districts, conducting a range of activities that incorporated a focus on gender, youth, conflict sensitivity, social accountability, and strengthening community capacities and ownership. The second program, through Mercy Corps, works in Karamoja’s Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, and Moroto districts and reached more than 264,000 participants in FY 2021 through activities focused on strengthening and enhancing household capacity to sustain food an nutrition security.



Three women pose at a baking class in Karamoja’s Nakapiripirit District, part of a USAID/BHA-funded CRS program that aims to build resilience, support livelihoods, and improve food and nutrition security for vulnerable rural populations in Uganda. Photo Credit: Will Baxter for CRS

- USAID/BHA has also funded the AVSI Foundation since FY 2017 to implement a program in Western Region’s Kamwenge District among vulnerable Ugandan community members as well as refugees in the Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. The program aims to improve the ability of participant households to effectively manage shocks and sustainably meet basic household needs through capacity building in multiple areas. In FY 2021, the program reached nearly 5,510 people with regular coaching sessions on topics including business management, financial literacy, formation and participation in savings groups, nutrition education and screening, and private sector linkages. A 2021 assessment found that coaching was cited as the strongest influence over improved nutrition and WASH practices.

USAID/BHA Funding in Uganda ¹			
	Emergency ²	ER4	TOTAL
FY 2020	\$91,843,045	\$21,751,604	\$113,594,649
FY 2021	\$84,316,922	\$18,027,505	\$102,344,427

¹ Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2021. Totals include estimated value of food assistance and transportation costs at time of procurement; subject to change.

² Includes funding for programs that integrate ER4 activities with emergency response.